

SOUTH CAROLINA SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT Council News

"Civic Engagement in Public Education"

Volume 30, Edition 2, 2008



Bookman Road Elementary School Takes Home 2008 Dick and Tunky Riley School Improvement Award

The School Improvement Council of Bookman Road Elementary School, Richland School District Two, took top honors on March 8, 2008 and was named the recipient of the Dick and Tunky Riley School Improvement Award for 2008. The award was presented by Senator Joel Lourie at the School Improvement Council's Annual Conference in Columbia.



Bookman Road SIC Chair Tanya Rodriguez-Hodges addresses the SIC Annual Conference audience on March 8, 2008

"We are very pleased to present this well-deserved honor to the School Improvement Council of Bookman Road Elementary," said SC-SIC Board of Trustees Chair Jeff Nicholson. "This impressive effort to engage parents and community members in the life and betterment of the school is truly what SICs are all about – and what this award acknowledges."

The Bookman Road Elementary SIC regularly evaluates the schools' needs based upon its students' needs. The council coordinated local business support for construction of the Lighthouse Lookout Nature Trail, used for student observations of animals, habitats and vegetation. Bookman's SIC also spearheaded a Palmetto Pride

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Tunky Riley's Quiet Leadership

By Inez Tenenbaum

March 15, 2008

Ann "Tunky" Yarborough Riley enriched the lives of all who knew her, and she made a lasting contribution to the quality of life in South Carolina. For decades, in both public and private life, she worked tirelessly for the public schools of South Carolina, the arts and the beautification of our state.

In the service of worship celebrating her life that was held at Furman University on Monday, retired United Methodist Church Bishop Marshall L. Meadors Jr. offered words of remembrance for Tunky. He noted that her life was dedicated to the causes of social justice and education and described her as fair and accepting of all people regardless of race, origin, faith or sexual orientation. He said that she was totally without pretense, treating all people with respect and kindness regardless of their circumstances.

Tunky was open-minded, gracious and blessed with an ebullient sense of humor. She was wise and demonstrated excellent judgment in her family life, the political arena and on issues of the day. She was a good listener, always more interested in hearing the thoughts of other people than sharing her own.

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S.C. House Member Robert Williams Named SIC Advocate of the Year

Each year, the SC-SIC Board chooses to recognize someone who has gone above and beyond the call to advocate for school improvement councils in their community of influence. We are very pleased to present S.C. House Representative Robert Q. Williams with this year's SIC Advocate of the Year Award.



Rep. Williams accepts the SIC Advocate of the Year Award

The Honorable Robert Q. Williams, who represents Darlington and Florence counties in the SC House, actively supports school improvement councils on the local and state

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Message from . . . the Executive Director

Cassie Barber, M.A.

Make Your Vote Count – This Summer!

The SC School Improvement Council slogan is “civic engagement in public education” and we are working diligently to help not just local school improvement council members, but everyone in the greater school community become involved in education in a variety of ways. *One of the most important ways you can be actively engaged in improving public education is to cast informed votes at the ballot box.*

Our nation is focused on the presidential race coming this November with an interest and fervor that hasn't been exhibited in decades. The person who becomes our next president will likely make key policy changes that will affect education for years to come. But there is another election that will have a direct and immediate effect on the education your child receives – the race to see who will represent you in the South Carolina General Assembly. The legislature creates new laws and policies every year that sets the course for education in our state. You have a responsibility to educate yourself about the candidates' views on education and make an informed vote.

2008 is an election year for all members of both the SC House and the Senate. A significant number of incumbents have chosen not to run for re-election and others who are running again have opposition – so voters have a number of choices to make! And you may not have to wait until November to make your choice known; your vote can really make a difference this June! Republican and Democratic primaries will be held on **June 10**. For a number of House and Senate races, this will be THE election because the only opposition some candidates have is from within their own party. The candidate who wins the primary and doesn't have any opposition from the other party wins the election!

Many voters overlook the June primaries, especially if there is no one running from their party of choice or if they are Independents. Unlike some other states, *South Carolina voters are not required to register as a member of a particular party in order to vote in the primary.* You are welcome and encouraged to vote in *either* the Republican *or* the Democratic primary in June. Just tell the poll worker which primary you want to vote in – it's as simple as that. You are not locked into one party or the other for future primaries and no one will ask you to choose a party in a general election when Democrats and Republicans are running against each other.

So this summer, before you head off for vacation or delve into that great summer read, take a look at www.scvotes.org and familiarize yourself with the candidates. **You can also register to vote at this web site!** Don't depend on the slick campaign flyers and postcards in your mailbox to give you all the information you need. They rarely tell the whole story about a candidate. Attend a candidate forum or a “meet and greet,” place a call, or write a letter with your questions to determine which candidate will actively support public education. Then *make sure you are registered to vote*, mark your calendar for June 10, or fill out an absentee ballot so you don't forget!

Cassie



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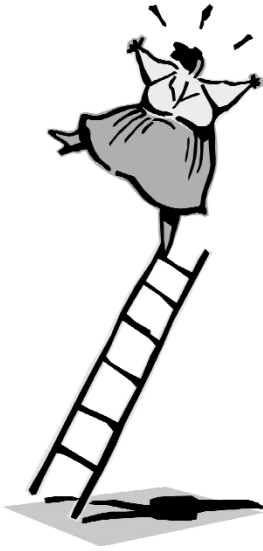
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SICs Climb to Riley Award Heights!

Bookman Road Elementary Takes Top Honors

Camden Elementary School of the Creative Arts, Laurel Hill Primary, Meadowfield Elementary, and Pineview Elementary Achieve Honorable Mention



Bookman Road Elementary School SIC members, winners of the 2008 Dick and Tunky Riley School Improvement Award, pose with Sen. Joel Lourie. Pictured are (left to right): Assistant Principal Kendra James; Bookman SIC Chair Tanya Rodriguez-Hodges; Senator Lourie; and Principal Michael Guliano.



2008 Riley Award Honorable Mention - Camden Elementary School of the Creative Arts. Pictured left to right: Trudy Ranges, Principal Ed Yount, SIC Chair Brian Hann, Assistant Principal Betty Turner, and SIC Vice Chair Maria Spring



2008 Riley Award Honorable Mention - Laurel Hill Primary School. Pictured left to right: Assistant Principal Kaleen Pulley, Margi Myers, SIC Chair Julie Allan, and Principal Michael Antonelli



2008 Riley Award Honorable Mention - Meadowfield Elementary School. Pictured left to right: Mary Jo Lounsberry, Principal Paula Stephens, SIC Chair Debra Tedeschi, and Falcia Harvey



2008 Riley Award Honorable Mention - Pineview Elementary School. Pictured left to right: Lynn Moseley, Parent, Kelli Edwards, Teacher, Tammye Smith, Parent, Kim Parker, Parent, Jennifer Broughton, Parent, Miley Rhodes, Interim Principal, SIC Chair Tim Fitzgerald, Cindy Stiltner, Assistant Principal, Jean Cochran, Teacher

Riley Award Honorable Mention Schools

Reach Out, Reach Higher

Camden Elementary School of the Creative Arts, Kershaw County School District, is located in the historic district of Camden, S.C. The school serves a diverse population of 550 students, integrating the arts throughout the entire curriculum. The School Improvement Council adopted the International Standards Organization's (ISO) methodology, which allows the ranking and evaluation of school activities based on their overall impact on students and the learning environment. The major areas of focus for the SIC have been on increasing English/Language Arts scores, increasing individualized assistance programs, making the school's decision process more data-driven, and improving the school grounds and facilities. The School Improvement Council is chaired by Mr. Brian R. Hann, and Mr. Ed Yount is Principal at Camden Elementary School of the Creative Arts.

Laurel Hill Primary School, Charleston County School District, is fortunate to have a group committed to supporting and developing literacy skills for at-risk students in the community. The Mt. Pleasant, S.C. school's SIC assists in the design and implementation of several literacy initiatives to proactively help needy preschool students. The school's LEAP (Linking Education and Preschoolers) Into Reading Night has become an annual event introducing preschool children and their parents to the love of reading through a variety of literacy activities. The SIC also helps to coordinate a free summer enrichment program for 15 preschool students and organizes children's book drives gathering materials to distribute to students in the community. Mr. Michael Antonelli is Principal of Laurel Hill Primary and Ms. Julie Allan serves as SIC Chair.

Meadowfield Elementary School of Richland School District #1 set a number of goals in its 2005-2010 School Renewal Plan. The Columbia, S.C. school is focused on increased student achievement, positive professional development and an improved school community. The School Improvement Council sought a comprehensive framework which would allow for the realization of these objectives. Along with the Meadowfield faculty, staff and PTO, the SIC investigated the Paideia instructional method, which incorporates didactic instruction, intellectual coaching and seminar dialogue. Funding and intensive training was provided and Paideia arrived at the school in the 2006-2007 school year. According to SIC Chair Debra Tedeschi and Principal Paula Stephens, Meadowfield Elementary is set to become the first nationally-certified Paideia academy in South Carolina.

Pineview Elementary School, in West Columbia's Lexington County School District 2, is a community school serving many diverse ethnic and economic groups. The School Improvement Council has focused on community outreach, healthy learners, student achievement, and school attendance. The Panther ROAR recognition program was begun to praise student attendance, achievement and effort for each quarter. Reading initiative programs generated excitement that remained long after the fall and spring programs concluded. Community members, students and parents joined together to make the Walk to School, Grandparents' Lunch Week and Halloween Hike a big success. Principal Miley Rhodes and SIC Chair Tim Fitzgerald have led the SIC to work together with the school's PTA to insure a continuity of efforts benefitting the entire school community.

Conference Speaker Steve Constantino Engages SIC Members

Family engagement in public schools is a process, not an event, nationally-known educator and author Dr. Steven Constantino told SC-SIC Annual Conference participants. "Back to school night is an event," Constantino said. "It engages the already engaged."

Constantino shared his thoughts with over 300 parent, school and community leaders at the March 8th conference in Columbia, entitled "Reaching Higher by Reaching Out."

Schools should look beyond just events and pursue a true culture change to reach out to parents and families if they wish to engage them in their child's education and school, Constantino explained, using humor, personal anecdotes and thoughtful insight to share his experience in creating public schools that reach out and embrace the involvement of families.

As a high school principal Constantino led his school, Stonewall Jackson High in Virginia, to recognition as one of *Newsweek* magazine's "Top 100 High Schools" in 2000 and 2003, and *Time* magazine's "High School of the Year" in 2001. For years the school had been plagued with academic and disciplinary problems, having been led by nine previous principals over 23 years. Based on his experience and successes at Stonewall Jackson, Constantino founded Family Friendly Schools in 1999, dedicated to helping schools and districts around the country increase student achievement by developing networks of integrated relationships between leadership, staff and families, thereby creating a culture of high performance and learning outcomes.

In his presentation at the conference and during a question and answer session afterward, Constantino explained how he took steps to raise awareness of the vital role parents play in the success of schools. As a result, his school's attendance rate rose from 50 to 90 percent, and the drop out rate decreased to 2 percent. A key to such success, Constantino noted, was the importance of establishing effective relationships with families and realizing the value these relationships bring to schools.

"Until we, as educators, see value in our families, we will not see progressive change," Constantino said.

His program, "Engage All Families," is a five step process designed to create data-driven results through family engagement. It is currently in use by hundreds of schools and districts in 35 states.

“Tunky Riley’s Quiet Leadership”

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She was a kind, strong, gentle leader who was able to bring together people of all persuasions and political thought to reach consensus on major issues. Her leadership style was not the kind that makes the most speeches or gets the most media attention. Tunky’s leadership style was one that brought out the best in the people and made everyone feel their contributions were appreciated and significant.

Tunky’s family was the center of her life. During her 50 years of marriage to Dick Riley, she was at his side constantly and a true partner in all of his accomplishments and disappointments. She was an equally ardent advocate of improving education during his eight years as governor (1978-86) and eight years as U.S. secretary of education (1992-2000). In all cases she strongly supported her husband’s public agenda and added a level of advocacy that put people at ease with the changes that he sought.

Because of the trust she engendered, she was able to recruit people to the merits of his initiatives. She never spoke harshly, either publicly or privately, about people or issues. She remained poised, informed and thoughtful as Dick Riley’s closest supporter and kindest ally.

During her years as first lady, she led the efforts to restore and develop the Governor’s Mansion grounds to enclose the nine acres that surround the mansion, Boylston House and Lace House. She helped raise funds to complete the walkways, erect the wrought iron fences and gates and install the massive water fountain.

Tunky loved to garden, and she took great interest in assuring that the native flowers, plants and landscaping of the state were included in the gardens’ restoration. After the Rileys left the Governor’s Mansion, she was instrumental in the state’s initiative to plant wildflowers along the interstates of South Carolina.

In the early ’80s, Dick Riley led a mission of more than 100 South Carolinians from all faiths to Israel to visit that bastion of democracy and tour the places holy to all denominations. Late one day, as the sun set across the Sea of Galilee near Capernaum, Gov. Riley read to the group from the Sermon on the Mount. Among the text of that memorable New Testament scripture are these words: “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

That day, and no one could know then, the scripture spoke of the meekness and purity of heart that Tunky Riley possessed, and all who knew and loved her will retain that ancient description of this truly special person who graced our lives and served our state.

*Ms. Tenenbaum is the former S.C. education superintendent.
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Dick and Tunky Riley accept the award named in their honor, first presented in 2002

“Williams Named SIC Advocate of the Year”

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levels. He has served on the Darlington High School Improvement Council and is deeply committed to involving parents and community members in public education. After learning that the SC-SIC Board of Trustees had no representative from the Pee Dee area, he called SC-SIC Executive Director Cassie Barber to find out why not! She explained that previous Board members hailing from that area had been forced to resign due to health reasons and work commitments and no suitable candidate had been found to replace them. Representative Williams promised to find an excellent candidate to serve on the Board and indeed he did. Ms. Retha Ross was appointed to the Board last year and has already arranged for a district-wide SIC training and made personal visits to the schools in her area on behalf of SC-SIC. Representative Williams drove straight from the statehouse to attend the Darlington County SIC training and gave words of inspiration and encouragement to the participants that evening. He sponsored a concurrent resolution in the General Assembly to recognize the 30th anniversary of school improvement councils in South Carolina and honor all the school improvement council members who work to improve public education every day.

A member of the S.C. Army National Guard, Representative Williams is also a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, having served in Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2005. He is the recipient of two Army Achievement Medals and the Army Commendation Medal.

Representative Williams holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Voorhees College and a Master of Public Administration degree from Troy State University. He and his wife, Janice, have three children - Jacobie, Rodrick and Jarell.

“Bookman Road Elementary School Takes Top Honors”

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grant for improvements to the school grounds and coordinated the school’s first Take Pride (in the Outside) Day with over 140 volunteers from across the community. Based on the environmental improvements in their schoolyard, Bookman Road Elementary received designation as a National Wildlife Federation School Yard Habitat.

The annual Dick and Tunky Riley School Improvement Award was created in 2002 to recognize the significant contributions made to public education by the more than 15,000 School Improvement Council members who volunteer in every public school in S.C. The award is named in honor of former South Carolina Governor and U.S. Education Secretary Richard Riley and his late wife, Tunky, and recognizes the couple’s longstanding commitment to quality public education. Mrs. Riley, who passed away on Friday, one day before the Saturday conference, was remembered at there for both her gracious nature and her great contributions to education in South Carolina.

College Savings Programs Offer Opportunity for Significant Future Savings

Future Scholar is a qualified tuition program under Section 529 of the Internal Revenue Code that provides families a tax-advantaged way to save for college with flexibility and professional investment management. Future Scholar is sponsored by the state of South Carolina Office of the State Treasurer. Any U.S. citizen or resident alien can open a Future Scholar 529 College Savings Plan account. There are no income limitations or age restrictions.

The S.C. Tuition Prepayment Program (SCTPP) is operated under the Office of the State Treasurer. It allows families to pay in advance for a child's college tuition at any of South Carolina's public colleges and universities, with potential savings over the actual tuition costs at the time the child enrolls in college. The SCTPP locks in



today's tuition rates and provides for payment of tuition and fees at any of South Carolina's public colleges and universities, even if your child will not enroll in college for several years. Once enrolled in the Program, your SCTPP contract payments toward your child's tuition will not increase regardless of how much college tuition may increase.

Find out more about both programs by visiting the South Carolina Office of the State Treasurer College Savings Plans web page at http://www.treasurer.sc.gov/college_savings/.

Last chance to Submit Applications for SBE Outstanding Volunteers Award

Attention Principals, SIC Chairs and Members, District Contacts, and others! Each year the State Board of Education (SBE) recognizes individuals, businesses, **school improvement councils**, and civic organizations for their significant volunteer contributions to the education of children and youth in South Carolina.



You can make sure that individuals and/or groups who have made a difference in your school or school district are recognized for their contribution. Visit the SC-SIC Home page at <http://sic.sc.gov> and scroll to the bottom to download all of the information needed to complete nominations for the SBE Volunteers Awards. You may also contact Peggy Hogan at the S.C. Department Of Education for more information:

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The nomination deadline is May 15. Don't miss it if you know an outstanding volunteer that deserves recognition!

